United Nations A/AC.198/2001/2

General Assembly

Distr.: General
1 March 2001

Original: English

Committee on Information
Twenty-third session
30 April-11 May 2001

Reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications

Report of the Secretary General

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01-28237 (E) 190301

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 55/136 B, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications, encouraged him to continue the reorientation exercise, while stressing the need to take into account the views of Member States, and requested him to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-third session. The General Assembly also emphasized that, through its reorientation, the Department of Public Information should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and, where appropriate, other countries with special needs, including countries in transition, and that such reorientation should contribute to bridging the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries in the crucial field of public information and communications.

2. The present report, which has been prepared in response to the request of the General Assembly, highlights the most recent measures taken to further develop the conceptual framework and operational priorities for the reorientation of the Organization's information and communications policies, as elaborated in detail to the Committee at its twentieth session (see A/AC.198/1998/2). In considering the matter, the Committee should also take into account the information provided in the previous reports of the Secretary-General on the same subject (A/AC.198/1999/2 and A/AC.198/2000/2) and in the most recent report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/55/452). The present report should be read in conjunction with the other reports on specific aspects of the Department's work, which are also before the Committee at its twenty-third session.

II. Background

3. In March 1997, the Secretary-General recognized that, because the United Nations relies on public support to implement its goals, the Organization's message must be transmitted to the peoples of the world with more vigour and purpose. He stressed that, as a crucial element of his reform and revitalization plans for the Organization, the reorientation of public information policies and activities must result in reaching out to key disseminators of information, especially the media and non-governmental organizations, utilizing the latest information technologies. It is also essential to more actively support the activities of other substantive departments and to refocus resources to the country and regional levels. In pursuit of his commitment to enhance communications and his plans to build support for the Organization, he appointed a high-level task force to recommend steps to reorient United Nations public information activities. In its report (A/AC.198/1997/CRP.1), the task force called, inter alia, for consolidation of communications efforts within the Secretariat, and for making communications an integral part of all programme and policy decisions taken by the Organization.

4. In the conceptual framework for the reorientation that has emerged, the central objective of all public information activities is to build broad-based global support for the Organization by projecting it as an open and transparent institution, capable of meeting the goals of the Charter of the United Nations. Other strategic goals of the new orientation are: to place communications and information functions at the heart of the strategic management of the Organization; provide overall direction and coordination of a unified communications strategy; and develop a culture of communications throughout the Organization. Considerable progress has been made in these areas, as demonstrated in the sections set out below, which highlight developments in the core areas of activity of the Department of Public Information.

III. Policy and strategic direction

5. At the Millennium Summit, held from 6 to 8 September 2000, the heads of State and Government reaffirmed that the United Nations is the indispensable common house of the entire human family, through which we will seek to realize our universal aspirations for peace, cooperation and development. In the Millennium Declaration, the world leaders gave clear directions for adapting the Organization to the new century. Concerned with the effectiveness of the United Nations, they stressed that they wanted action and, above all, results.

6. The Department of Public Information, which publicizes the message of the United Nations to the

people of the world and has a crucial role in shaping the voice of the Organization, will play an important part in meeting that challenge. As acknowledged in General Assembly resolution 13 (I) (annex I) of 13 February 1946, which created the Department, the United Nations cannot achieve the purposes for which it has been created unless the peoples of the world are fully informed of its aims and activities. To that end, further developing its client orientation, the Department will continue to provide other substantive departments, as well as offices of the United Nations system, as required, with essential public information-related services to enhance their worldwide outreach and generate public support. In so doing, the Department makes a vital contribution to advancing the substantive goals of the United Nations.

7. The vision of the Department of Public Information is clearly articulated in the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (A/55/6/Rev.1), as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/234. The plan sets out the overall orientation of the public information programme, the aim of which is to help build broad-based global public support for the Organization's goals through effective communication. In particular, it notes that emphasis will be placed on publicizing effectively and in a timely manner the activities of the Organization and the relevance of its work to the daily lives and concerns of people everywhere. The Department has used programme 23 of the medium-term plan and its four subprogrammes related to promotional, information, library and publication services as the basis for the formulation of its submission for the proposed programme budget for the 2002-2003 biennium. In the plan, it is recalled that the Committee on Information provides overall guidance to the Department in its implementation of programme 23.

8. Building on the public interest in the Organization generated worldwide as a result of the Millennium Summit, a series of innovations have been made to increase global support for its activities. Such actions on the part of the Department, which are detailed in the present report, include a more determined effort to optimize the use of information technology, both new and conventional, to bring news of United Nations goals and activities to all regions of the world, in particular to media news desks; strengthening the United Nations web site as a major communications tool to enable hundreds of millions of people all over the world to obtain direct access to information about the United Nations; creating a United Nations news service, catering to the 24-hour global news cycle; successfully introducing live United Nations radio broadcasts, delivering daily 15-minute news bulletins in all six official languages to radio stations around the world; implementing the system-wide "The United Nations works" programme, which strives to highlight how the United Nations is making a difference in peoples' daily lives; and devising new ways to build partnerships within the United Nations system, with non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, the business community and the media.

IV. New technology

9. Underlying all of the Department of Public Information's groundbreaking initiatives is the commitment to embrace new communications technology to strengthen the effectiveness of its programmes. The overall goal is to develop an infrastructure capable of developing instantaneous transmission of text, image and voice messages from the Organization to the world. Across all media, the ability of the Department to increase productivity and meet the needs of the end-users in every world region will be critically dependent on choices about investing in technology that will have to be made in the near future.

A. United Nations web site

10. The United Nations has leveraged the new technology of the Internet and has been using it as a major communications tool. The Organization is now in a position to address a world audience without relying exclusively on the traditional disseminators of information. The United Nations web site has achieved remarkable success in that respect, registering more than 488 million hits from all parts of the world in 2000, more than double the number of hits in the previous year (198 million). As a point of reference for the phenomenal growth of the web site, in 1996 it registered 11 million hits.

11. On 1 September 2000, the first major redesign of the web site was unveiled simultaneously in all official languages. Improved navigation, more cross-

referencing and visually identical design in all languages are the main features. For the first time, statements made to the General Assembly during the Millennium Summit and the general debate at the fifty-fifth session were scanned and uploaded to the web site, and were available on-line shortly after delivery.

12. The operation, maintenance and updating of the United Nations web site have placed considerable demands on the Department of Public Information. Following up General Assembly resolution 54/250, part VIII, regarding the establishment of the three new posts of coordinators for the Arabic, Chinese and Russian web sites, recruitment procedures for those posts have been completed or are well advanced. In order to provide overall policy guidance in this important area, the Publications Board has adopted guidelines for Internet publishing, which are being issued as an administrative instruction. During the past year, the Department has launched new web pages, featuring upcoming activities. Of special interest to the Committee on Information is a new site that features background information on the work of the Committee and its Bureau, membership and documentation, including the reports of the Secretary-General submitted at its four most recent sessions. Other new sites include sites for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations; the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries; and the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

13. As part of its efforts to stimulate use of the United Nations web site, the Department of Public Information has continued to conduct training seminars for information officials from developing countries. Following the success of the first seminar, held in Abidjan in July 1999, the second seminar, on the theme "The Internet as an instrument for development", was held in Beirut in October 2000, and was conducted in Arabic and French, bringing together 28 participants from 14 countries. The objective of the seminars was to familiarize participants with the resources offered by the United Nations system on the Internet in French and Arabic. Participants also learned techniques for web page creation. Plans are under way to organize similar seminars for other regions.

14. The Department of Public Information will continue to enhance the web site in all official languages. A comprehensive report on the multilingual development of the web site will also be before the Committee. In order to reap the full benefits of this new and rapidly expanding medium, some additional investment in human and other resources will be necessary to maintain the Organization's position in this fast-moving field. To that end, steps have already been taken to redirect resources within the Department's existing budget towards information technology services.

B. Radio and television

15. The harnessing of digitization and advances in broadband and other developments in "convergence" will significantly increase productivity as activities in one medium are able to be deployed across the others. An expert consultant's report detailed the key requirements for the Department of Public Information to position itself effectively in the digital environment. The results of that study form the basis for the Department's proposed retooling of its production and delivery capacity, as set out in its submission for the proposed programme budget for the 2002-2003 biennium. In the consultant's report, it was noted that most of the existing television plant at Headquarters needs replacing or upgrading to bring it in line with digital industry standards. Similarly, much of the radio equipment at Headquarters is 30 years old. The Department is therefore proposing a five-year technology strategy to overhaul the radio and television broadcast facilities to meet the requirements of the new media production and dissemination environment, without ignoring the needs of media dependent on more traditional delivery systems.

C. United Nations News Centre and related services

16. The Internet has continued to revolutionize the packaging and delivery of news, and the Department of Public Information is expanding its utilization of this medium in an increasingly multimedia framework. The United Nations News Centre, one of the most widely used elements of the United Nations web site, has now firmly established itself as the gateway to the world of news at the Organization. The immediacy of reporting on activities both from Headquarters and from around the world, as well as the journalistic style and global

reach of the News Centre, has led to an increasing use of United Nations News Service dispatches by some media outlets, particularly in developing countries, as well as by various United Nations offices and operations in their information products.

17. A more dynamic and interconnected design for the News Centre now includes a "ticker-tape" for breaking news and headline summaries, improved links to audio for broadcasters, and regular feature and interview sections designed to give a high profile to the broadest range of United Nations activities.

18. The deployment of an integrated digital photo management system later in 2001 will also enable users to search for photographs online and download or link images to illustrate their news pages. The web site has also become an important window for the United Nations to promote its video products, including documentaries.

19. Closely linked to the delivery of news and information on the web site will be an electronic mail-based news alert service, which will go directly to the news desk of media around the world, as well as to other key target audiences. The service, which will be organized along both regional and thematic lines to maximize its interest worldwide, will be launched before the next General Assembly.

D. Public services

20. The Internet is also facilitating the increase in the efficiency in public outreach, especially to students. Web versions of the publications of the Department of Public Information, such as the "Student briefing papers on the Millennium report and Declaration", issued in 2000, have been produced and are often available to readers before the printed versions. On the United Nations web site, pages are being developed to provide more information about the guided tour operation, including what one can expect to see on tour. Also, with the help of the optical disk system, requests by the public for United Nations documents are now handled electronically.

E. Exhibits

21. The Department of Public Information has continued to expand its use of new technologies for exhibits. On the guided tour route, exhibits are being redesigned to enable guides to use interactive displays in their presentations. Also, design and post-production files of recent exhibits are maintained on the web, making it possible to update material for the travelling exhibits at relatively low cost. For the newly designed exhibit on disarmament, displayed on the guided tour route, the latest digital printing technology has been used to produce large photographic murals at about one third of the production cost of a decade ago. In addition, by combining in-house design skills with the latest available technology, the Department will be able to produce low-cost companion information pieces for its exhibits, including brochures and web pages.

F. Library services

22. The presence of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library on the Internet continues to increase, with its web page registering 1.5 million hits in 2000. The site's development is ongoing, through the enhancement of existing features and addition of new ones. UNBISnet (http://unbisnet.un.org), which comprises the Library's major databases, including its public catalogue, is now available on a web platform to a global audience, without restriction. Among the specialized files included are citations to speeches made at meetings of the main organs of the United Nations, as well as detailed voting records for resolutions adopted by the General Assembly (1983 onwards) and the Security Council (1946 onwards).

V. Reaching the media

23. The ability of the United Nations to communicate its message and relevance to audiences around the globe depends to a large extent on how well it projects its operations to the media, who are the principal disseminators of United Nations news to the world community. To that end, the Department of Public Information has further enhanced its services to the media in order to encourage comprehensive and accurate reporting on the full range of United Nations activities.

24. The Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General continues to increase substantially the information flow from the United Nations to journalists, as well as to Governments and the general public. The daily noon press briefing, prepared and

presented by the Office of the Spokesman, with input from the entire United Nations system, remains the primary vehicle of information delivery for the Organization. The briefings are aired live on in-house television, on a local cable television channel in the New York area and on the web. A special viewing facility has been provided for delegations to have access to the background briefings provided to journalists, which offers to Member States the full and direct access to the briefings which they have requested. The condensed contents of the briefings are then rapidly posted on the web.

25. A key dimension of the strengthened media effort is to bring the United Nations, including its most senior officials, directly to the desks of journalists in all regions of the world, using both new technology and traditional instruments, such as the telephone. The Department has arranged briefings from Headquarters for groups of journalists in the various world regions through teleconferencing in order to ensure accurate and comprehensive coverage of important events, such as the launch of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations in August 2000. To strengthen such direct unfiltered access to senior media figures, the Department has also continued its programme of high-level briefings for senior journalists. The last two programmes brought United States and African journalists to New York for briefings by, among others, the Secretary-General, the Deputy-Secretary-General and heads of United Nations programmes and departments. A third programme, for Asian journalists, is now being planned. Feedback from the journalists themselves and from the extensive coverage of United Nations issues in many of the media organizations they represented have demonstrated the benefits of the programme. Another innovative and effective mechanism for directly communicating the Organization's message is the systematic, global placement of op-ed articles by the Secretary-General and other senior officials, particularly in connection with major conferences and similar events.

26. Towards the objective of promoting a culture of communications throughout the Organization, the Department, in conjunction with the United Nations Staff College, organized a communications workshop in Milan, in February 2001 for officials at the Assistant Secretary-General and Director level, combining strategic communication sessions and specific media training. This was a follow-up to a very successful workshop held in October 2000 at Headquarters for officials at the Under-Secretary-General level. A programme of communications training for other officials is being prepared by the Staff College, in cooperation with the Department of Public Information.

27. The increased integration of news stories directly from the field is an essential element in the Department's plans to enhance services to the media. In the light of the global 24-hour news cycle, the Department is looking into the resource and technical implications of the direct posting of news material from principal United Nations offices around the world into its news sites on the web. Advances in telecommunications also help the Department to make available updated information from United Nations peacekeeping missions.

28. The Department's 2000 training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and countries in transition was held from 29 August to 6 October 2000. Efforts continue to enable a larger number of trainees to participate.

29. In support of the Secretary-General's Millennium Report (A/54/2000) and his call to build digital bridges, the fifth United Nations World Television Forum, held in November 2000, brought together some 1,000 industry leaders and experts from every part of the world for a thorough examination of the ways in which the television industry could contribute to bridging the digital divide and a discussion of other challenges facing the industry in the digital era. One of the conclusions of the Forum was that for any international action plan on information technology for development to succeed, it would have to include the active involvement of the traditional media of television and radio.

VI. Radio and television

A. Radio

30. One of the more dramatic and successful examples of the reorientation of the Department of Public Information has been the pilot project for direct international radio broadcasting from United Nations Headquarters. After more than 15 years of taped radio programme production and distribution, United Nations

Radio shifted in September 2000 to daily live broadcasting in the six official languages to large audiences in different regions of the world. This required a major and comprehensive reorientation of the process of programme planning, development, production and delivery to the global broadcast market. The project sought to achieve the dual objectives of capturing and delivering United Nations-generated news content to the demanding 24-hour news cycle around the world, and fostering enhanced partnership with radio stations and networks broadcasting to national audiences in different languages and geographical regions. The pilot project has established a direct, immediate and effective daily channel of communication with the world's broadcast media and, through them, to a vast global audience. Some 155 networks in all regions have already become partners of United Nations Radio. A comprehensive report on the pilot project is also before the Committee (A/AC.198/2001/7).

B. Television

31. In the television and video area as well, the Department of Public Information has increased the flow of live feeds and other readily usable video materials for use by international television news syndicators and national broadcasting organizations.

32. In a dramatic innovation in the television area, witnessed by assembled world leaders during the Millennium Summit, state-of-the-art high-definition giant television screens, along with specialized cameras and switching equipment, were supplied and installed by NHK, the Japanese public broadcaster, in the General Assembly Hall. The outstanding coverage that the Summit received in broadcast media worldwide reflected the impact of this innovation and the strong relationship between United Nations Television and international and national television broadcasters.

VII. Thematic information programmes

33. Using its communications expertise, the Department of Public Information works closely with Secretariat departments and other entities to develop information programmes and products to advocate their work on various priority issues. The Department designed the "The United Nations works" programme as a new, system-wide and global effort to build on the public interest generated by the Millennium Summit and to show the impact of the Organization's activities at the local level in every country around the world. This campaign, as well as all of the Department's promotional services, aim to give concrete expression to the term "We the Peoples", the first words of the Charter of the United Nations, by widely demonstrating that the United Nations has an impact on the daily lives of people everywhere.

34. Communications strategies, modelled on the one successfully developed by the Department to promote the Millennium Summit, are being implemented to publicize the forthcoming series of follow-up conferences and special sessions of the General Assembly. Among the tools used by the Department in these promotional campaigns, in addition to the more traditional print, radio and television products, are the creative techniques of modern global public relations companies, whose expertise has been utilized on a pro bono basis. Since the media are one of the major targets for the thematic advocacy campaigns, the Department is also developing closer long-term relationships with journalists covering specialized areas, such as economics and business, women's issues, human rights, disarmament and social concerns. Partnerships with civil society groups have become even more central to thematic advocacy campaigns as an effective means of multiplying their impact.

35. The Department is also working closely with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to implement an information campaign that aims to generate media attention for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. Innovative field-based activities in 2001 are part of the promotional campaigns to publicize the special sessions of the General Assembly being convened for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and on HIV/AIDS, as well as the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

36. Building on successful media campaigns in 1999 and 2000 to publicize the work of the Economic and Social Council, the Department of Public Information will develop a similar strategy for the high-level

segment of the Council's substantive session of 2001, to be held in Geneva, which will focus on the role of the United Nations in support of the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development.

37. The Department organized the observance of the fifteenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, on 26 April 2001. It is also implementing a programme of promotional activities for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, which is detailed in another report which is before the Committee (A/AC.198/2001/3).

38. In the area of peace and security, the Department of Public Information is continuing its close cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with a view to addressing the public information requirements of peacekeeping operations, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/135. In particular, the Department of Public Information has continued to provide operational planning and support to field information offices, in close cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, in order to strengthen the public information capacity of peacekeeping and other field missions. In 2001, the Department of Public Information is undertaking several projects together with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the areas of rapid deployment of information personnel to field missions; start-up information kits for new field missions; and standard operating procedures for acquainting newly appointed senior mission personnel with public information needs, including media training. Public information activities of United Nations field missions are increasingly linked to Headquarters activities. Other proposals relating to public information support for United Nations peacekeeping and other field missions have been outlined in the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809) and the related report of the Secretary-General on resource requirements for the implementation of the recommendations of the Panel's report (A/55/507 and Add.1). The Department of Public Information is also increasing its cooperation with the Department for Disarmament Affairs in the area of public outreach.

VIII. Building global partnerships

39. In accordance with the provisions of the Millennium Declaration, the Department of Public Information will continue to extend stronger support to its partners in civil society in order to enable them to disseminate the United Nations message to their constituencies. The Department's partnership with the community of non-governmental organizations aims to increase the quality of communications rather than merely the number of associated organizations. Being acutely aware of the need to reach partners in the community of non-governmental organizations in the developing countries, the Department has been working with its NGO Executive Committee to finance the participation of speakers from developing countries at the Department's annual non-governmental organizations conference. In addition, special programmes and events remain essential in the effort to further enhance the public image of the United Nations and increase its visibility, often among audiences that would otherwise not be reached. These events have an immediate impact and offer opportunities for co-sponsorship with partners outside the Organization.

40. The General Assembly has asked the Secretary-General to focus on educational institutions as key and indispensable partners of the United Nations. The Department of Public Information therefore strongly encourages learning and teaching about the United Nations, whether through visits and programmes at Headquarters, model United Nations conferences and related information products, or distance-learning using web-based activities and videoconferences.

IX. Information activities in the field

41. While continuing to fulfil their essential role as producers, disseminators and promoters of United Nations information material, United Nations information centres, services and United Nations offices have taken a number of steps to widen their outreach.

42. The Millennium Summit was embraced by United Nations information centres as a unique opportunity to bring the United Nations system closer together at the local level. The spirit of inter-agency cooperation generated by the many joint activities and events marking the occasion was further strengthened by the centres' use of the "The United Nations works"

concept to highlight projects carried out locally by the specialized agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations system to help improve peoples' lives.

43. The policy of the Department of Public Information becoming increasingly news-oriented has provided opportunities for the United Nations information centres to better serve local media. By following developments at Headquarters and around the world, the information centres select news stories, translate them into local languages and transmit them to local media, with a national or regional context highlighted. The value of that approach is further enhanced by the information centres' ability to supplement brief news stories with comprehensive background material.

44. The centres are working extensively with educational institutions and youth organizations to stimulate interest in the aims and activities of the Organization. Lectures, workshops, video screenings, model United Nations, essay competitions, curriculum development, teacher training, internships and, increasingly, training in the use of the Internet for research and teaching purposes are some of the tools used by the centres. Many information centres have made Internet-connected computer terminals available to visitors to their reference libraries, allowing them to benefit from the wealth of information available from the United Nations web site. Local non-governmental organizations are invaluable partners for the information centres, and often provide human and financial resources to help the centres to launch major initiatives otherwise beyond their limited means.

45. The Department's investment in new technology, including the establishment of electronic mail in all information centres, has resulted in significant improvements in the timely transmission of information material to the centres and in their ability to disseminate it locally. It has also allowed information centres to jointly translate and print major reports on a task-sharing basis. A total of 36 centres have established web sites, often in local languages. Also, as a pilot project, 10 university libraries have been linked electronically to a local centre library. Videoconferencing, live-feeds and web-casts from events at Headquarters are increasingly being used to attract local participants to seminars, briefings and workshops organized by the centres.

X. Publications

46. Technological innovation has enhanced both the production process and the range and reach of products. Every effort is being made to ensure that publications contain comprehensive, objective and equitable information about the issues before the Organization. A key development in recent months has been the emergence of "twin-engined publications", piloted both by their print versions and electronic formats. The quarterly *UN Chronicle*, for instance, continues to serve a large subscriber base in hard copy, even as its on-line editions command the degree of spontaneous readership and interactive response that the Internet makes possible. The *UN Chronicle* has received contributions from heads of State and senior government officials, who offer spirited and incisive commentary on the United Nations and its vital concerns. Field reports, interviews and "first person" articles bring home the work and potential of the United Nations system to the level of the general reader.

47. *Africa Recovery* continues to report on the activities of the United Nations, the multilateral agencies and the donor countries in relation to Africa, and on the efforts of African countries to respond to the development challenges facing their continent. *Africa Recovery* works with key African dailies to reproduce United Nations stories in the local press. Also, plans are now under way for an electronic mail service that will provide journalists in Africa with information in a more timely fashion.

48. The 1997 and 1998 editions of the Organization's most important reference work, the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, have been published by the Department during the past year. Preparation of the 1999 edition, using an upgrade in typesetting software, is under way. A contract has also been negotiated with an outside vendor for the compilation of the *Yearbook*'s first half-century on CD-ROM.

49. *UN Development Business*, a self-financed, subscription-based publication, continues to provide procurement and bidding information on development projects worldwide funded by the major development banks, including the World Bank, government agencies, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system. In an effort to expand its circulation and outreach, *Development Business* has designed a focused marketing strategy and has placed a

series of articles in business trade journals, including *World Trade*, *Export America* and *MDBO*. The *Development Business* web site has created a faster and more efficient avenue for the dissemination of information on procurement and bidding. An income-generating Internet advertising and directory medium, now under construction, is also expected to produce positive results.

50. Broad outreach for the Organization's publications is also being achieved through the promotional activities undertaken by the Department's sales operation through both traditional and Internet means. Such activities generate income for the Organization and serve as an effective vehicle for placing information about the United Nations in the hands of a wide audience.

51. As part of its mandate to assist various United Nations organs and departments, the Department has continued to provide cartographic services almost daily to the Security Council, and to supply crucial information for United Nations peacemaking and peacekeeping activities. Although traditional paper maps are still indispensable in many areas, new uses of digital geographic information have been emerging based on advanced computer technologies. The map production process has been thoroughly computerized, and all the maps created by the Department are posted on its web site. The site registers more than 4,000 hits a day, and has more than 12,000 subscribers who regularly receive information about updates.

XI. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

52. Through ongoing programmes and new initiatives, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library continues to reinforce its commitment to bridging the digital divide. The recently launched "Small and field libraries technical assistance" page on the Library's web site (http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/sflib/index.html) aims to prevent unnecessary duplication of work, facilitate resource sharing and encourage the exchange of training, standards and recommended best practices. Although it was created initially for United Nations libraries, the first steps were taken in 2001, in strategic partnership with the specialized agencies, to develop the site into a comprehensive library network for all country and field offices throughout the United Nations system, as well as United Nations information centres and depository libraries.

53. In keeping with the Organization's renewed emphasis on multilingualism, the *United Nations Documentation: Research Guide* (http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide) is being translated into all official languages, and chapters of the French version (http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/dhlf/resguidf/indexfr.htm) have recently been posted. The Library's thesaurus files have almost been completed in all official languages. With the completion of translations of the *United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS) Thesaurus* into Arabic, Chinese and Russian, multilingual subject access to the optical disk system and other United Nations documentation databases will be achieved in 2001.

54. The Library is continuing the retrospective posting of pre-1993 parliamentary documentation to the optical disk system. Currently, Security Council documents are available in English from 1986 onwards, and General Assembly documentation is available in English from its forty-first session onwards and in Arabic, French and Spanish from its forty-sixth session onwards.

55. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is continuing to expand its Secretariat partnerships by offering consultation and advisory services on database structures, web design and digitization, as well as by intense training programmes that are customized to fit user needs with a view to promoting greater self-reliance in conducting research.

56. Paramount among inter-agency cooperative efforts is the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium. This initiative, led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, centralizes the purchasing of on-line information products and services for over 70 individual entities throughout the United Nations system. Because of the economies of scale achieved through the Consortium, the Library is now able to provide the permanent missions of Member States with remote access to previously expensive and in some cases unaffordable electronic databases and services.

57. Selective dissemination of information — the delivery of customized data via electronic mail to staff system-wide and permanent missions at Headquarters — continues to be a major service provided by the Library. In 2000, more than one million articles, selected from 46 electronic publications, were sent to subscribers worldwide.

58. As part of its outreach to civil society in Member States, the Library has continued to conduct training seminars and workshops for depository librarians. In addition to training provided at Headquarters for visiting librarians, three regional workshops (in Brussels, Islamabad and Moscow) were held in 2000. Regional workshops in Central America and Africa are planned for 2001. In an effort to bring depository libraries into active partnership in the dissemination of United Nations information, the Library has expanded its electronic mail dissemination of important messages to libraries with the capacity to receive them.

XII. Conclusion

59. The Secretary-General has assigned a major role to communications and information activities in order to create broad-based, global support for the United Nations. The Department of Public Information will build further upon the initiatives already taken to strengthen its information programme and retool its capabilities in the fast-moving communications age. The Department will work to ensure that the communications function is placed at the heart of the strategic management of the Organization, and that accordingly the importance of communications in policy-making is recognized. Also central to its continuing reorientation is the development of a strategic vision linking all the components of the Secretariat, as well as an emphasis on planning and cooperation within the Organization to meet its many and varied information goals.

60. As detailed in the present report, the Department of Public Information's utilization of new technology is essential to the reorientation process and is particularly crucial in an environment of increasing workloads, without compensatory resources. Technological innovation is helping the Department to overcome those limitations through improved productivity and efficiency and worldwide speed of delivery. Inevitably, however, outdated communications infrastructures will need to be replaced, which will require resource investments.

61. It should be emphasized that the Department is continuing to respond to the General Assembly's call to maintain and improve its activities in areas in which developing countries have special needs. These efforts infuse every aspect of the Department's information programmes, such as in the work of its information centres at the national and regional levels, and in the strengthened media outreach and training programmes for the media from developing countries. The "The United Nations works" programme, which was developed by the Department, explains to people around the world how the Organization is addressing the main challenges of the twenty-first century, in particular in the area of economic and social development.

62. In keeping with the new organizational shift towards results-based management, the Department will intensify its efforts to obtain quality feedback from its target audiences on the effectiveness of its programme delivery, and will continue to adjust its products and activities in order to balance audience needs with available resources.

63. The Millennium Declaration reaffirmed that the United Nations is the "indispensable common house of the entire human family". The Department of Public Information is working to bring that concept to people everywhere, by demonstrating that the objectives and activities of the Organization are closely linked to their common future in a globalized world.

64. The mission of the Department of Public Information is summed up in its well-known initials: to make a **d**ifference by **p**romoting the United Nations and **i**nfluencing world opinion. It does so by seeking to be **d**ynamic in its work, **p**ro-active in its methods and **i**nteresting in its output. The Department looks forward to receiving the support and guidance of Member States, as it strives to meet this challenge.